INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS IN SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER, 1931

By C. F. BROOKS

Three recent international meetings of interest to meteorologists generally were the International Geographical Congress in Paris, the meetings of three commissions of the International Meteorological Organization in Innsbruck, and the joint meeting of the German and Austrian meteorological societies in Vienna. At the Paris congress, local climates and changes of climate in historic times were discussed at some length. The occurrence of marked contrasts in climate, especially temperature, in surprisingly short distances, was emphasized. A study of the different economic effects of contrasted climates in modern times was urged as a basis for interpreting the human record of earlier centuries in terms of climate. Certain changes in Egypt in the past 2,000 years are ascribable to factors other than climate, and it was concluded that the climate of Egypt has not changed appreciably since the time of Christ. This tallies with similar investigations made in Palestine and in Greece.

The meetings in Innsbruck comprised the Climatological, the Terrestrial Magnetism and Atmospheric Electricity and the Polar Year commissions. The city, the university, and the Tirolean government officials were unstinting in their entertainment of the small group of meteorologists assembled for these meetings. There were complimentary dinners and excursions to the mountains near by. The snow and cold weather of the first four days made the last two only the more beautiful.

Though this was the first meeting of the Climatological Commission, Dr. H. von Ficker, the president, guided its labors so effectively and Dr. W. Knoch, the secretary, prepared such excellent minutes, that a large program was put through without haste, yet within the limits of the seven sessions originally scheduled. Chief attention was directed toward bringing climatological programs into step with modern synoptic programs, both as to hours of observation and publication of daily values. Radio broadcasting of monthly means for a selected network of stations over the earth was recommended in order to aid studies in world weather and to make possible some long-range forecasting based on knowledge already gained. Studies in dynamic climatology, particularly of the frequency of occurrence of different air bodies (e. g., polar air and tropical air) and of the frequency of passage of fronts should be made at selected stations. Furthermore, the commission believed that daily weather maps of the northern hemisphere were much to be desired.

The Commission on Terrestrial Magnetism and Atmospheric Electricity and the Polar Year Commission under the able leadership of Dr. P. La Cour greatly advanced the project for the International Polar Year, 1932–33. On account of the world-wide economic depression the question was raised as to whether the plans for the polar year should be pressed forward or deferred until a more auspicious time. Those members of the commission who were present unanimously favored continuing the polar year plan, so great was the current interest, and so hopeful were they that notable results would be obtained. The networks of stations were recommended in detail, their programs were outlined, including photographic observations of the aurora, and detailed cloud and aerological observations. Radiosounding balloon work for certain stations was specially recommended, and the need for mountain observatories stressed. Plans were laid for observations during the total solar eclipse of August 31, 1932. The cooperation of observatories all over the world was solicited, especially on international days.

High spots of the meeting of the Austrian and German meteorological societies in Vienna were, the unveiling of the bronze placque of Julius von Hann in the hallway of the Zentralanstalt für Meteorologie und Geophysik, Dr. P. Goetz's photographs of sun pillars, and the symposium and exhibit on microclimatology arranged by Dr. W. Schmidt. This symposium disclosed a considerable activity in local climatology in central Europe, especially Vienna. Members of the staff of the Zentralanstalt had not only made temperature surveys and profiles through day and night, but also while traveling by auto investigated instrumentally the influence of the city on solar radiation. The reduction of sunlight intensity by city smoke in Vienna was shown to be very great, of the order of 50 per cent. After the symposium a room full of apparatus and maps and diagrams dealing with microclimatology was thrown open to inspection. Stationary and traveling instruments and observers have been used effectively in microclimatological investigations. The use of the automobile specially equipped with a psychrometer and other apparatus, is increasing rapidly. Knowledge of local differences in climate is valuable both economically and meteorologically. Farmers, orchardists, even city dwellers, are interested in a very practical way. The meteorologist sees in local differences convenient samples of equal differences in general climate at places separated by 500 to 1,000 miles.

The papers of the Paris Congress will soon be published in the proceedings of the Congress. The transactions of the several international commissions will be published by the secretariat of the International Meteorological Organization, and the papers presented at the Vienna meeting will be published in full or in abstract in the Meteorologische Zeitschrift.